

## News and Views

### Protection during Air Raids

THE recent air exercises at Portsmouth have shown once more that in some states of the weather it is impossible to prevent a hostile air fleet from launching an attack upon a city. It is essential, therefore, that we should do all we can to minimise the effects of air raids, if unfortunately it should be found impossible to prevent wars. The Government is preparing a series of six handbooks dealing with different aspects of the problem, and the first of these has recently been issued (*Air Raid Precautions, Handbook No. 2. Anti-Gas Precautions and First Aid for Air Raid Casualties*. Pp. 110. London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1935. 6d.). Mr. C. B. O. Mohr, 147 Milton Road, Cambridge, the secretary of the Cambridge Scientists' Anti-War Group, writes, however, to say that his Group considers that with the proposed protection casualties up to 30 per cent of urban populations are likely to occur. This Group is investigating the technical side of the problem, and he suggests that other scientific workers should do likewise and make their results known. These dangers can no longer be ignored, but on the other hand they should not be exaggerated. It is not only sensational journalists who have published misleading statements about new engines of war of extraordinary potency, but even statesmen in responsible positions who are in a position to obtain accurate information. One of these has said that scientific men "will turn to making a high explosive bomb about the size of a walnut and as powerful as a bomb of big dimensions". The actual fact is, however, that every endeavour has failed to produce an explosive appreciably more powerful than nitroglycerine, which was discovered by Sobrero in 1846. Equally exaggerated statements have been made about the effects of gas bombs; but high explosives, incendiary and gas projectiles are all very serious sources of danger and should be investigated authoritatively and impartially.

### Academic Freedom

THE Conference on Academic Freedom held at Oxford on August 14-16 was arranged by the provisional committee formed last October following the censure passed on addresses by Mr. H. D. Dickinson, of the University of Leeds, and Prof. H. J. Laski, of the University of London. The Conference opened with a discussion on academic and professional freedom, over which Prof. J. L. Myres presided, and a standing committee was formed to give permanent character to the protest against any infringement of the rights of academic freedom. Mr. G. D. H. Cole pointed out that, although in Great Britain we are relatively immune from interference with academic and professional freedom, there is a serious danger of a rapid growth of intolerance, and this applies particularly to the professional

worker in business or industry. What is wanted is not to prevent interference altogether but to keep it within the limits within which it is absolutely necessary. The difficulty arises over the exercise of the professional man's rights as a citizen and the rights he holds in common with other people in matters of personal conduct and behaviour. Bertrand Russell made a vigorous plea for freedom for teachers to express their opinions within as well as outside their professional activities, and for organised defence against victimisation.

At the second session of the Conference, over which Prof. Lascelles Abercrombie presided, the question of international professional relief was discussed. Reports were read dealing with the persecution of teachers of all grades in Italy, Spain and Bulgaria as well as in Germany. Prof. Abercrombie said that internationalism must be identified with civilisation itself. A resolution was passed recognising the need of relief for persecuted teachers in other countries besides Germany, and establishing a committee to co-ordinate such work internationally. The final session of the Conference, over which Prof. Julian Huxley presided, dealt with the utilisation of science, and Prof. Huxley suggested that a long-range policy of the utilisation of science would involve the transformation of the economic and social system. Mr. J. L. Hodgson insisted that no creative work of value is ever done for money, and Dr. L. E. C. Hughes said that if science is to have a broadening humanitarian future and the scientific worker is to have a share of responsibility for his actions, it can only be in accordance with his own standards of scientific procedure and not with those arbitrarily imposed by non-scientific politicians. A resolution was passed to set up a committee of representatives of scientific and technical organisations to co-ordinate the activities of scientific associations and scientific workers in carrying out the pledge to secure that, so far as lay in their power, science should be used only for the benefit of humanity.

### Artificial Radioactivity and Therapeutics

A NOTE in *The Times* of August 24 states that Prof. Ernest Lawrence, of the University of California, reports further progress in the production of artificial radioactivity. By subjecting ordinary salt to high-voltage X-rays, he claims to have produced in his laboratory minute amounts of radio-sodium, which emits radiation only of the  $\gamma$ -type, and has a half-life period of only about 15 hours as compared with the 1700 years of radium, while the suggestion is made that great therapeutic possibilities are thus opened up. The high reputation of Prof. Lawrence leaves us in no doubt as to the validity of his experimental claim; but it seems all the more necessary to suspend judgment about therapeutic possibilities until a vast